

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
AMVETS CLUB POST #9, BISMARCK ND

August 3, 2007
1:00pm

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Mike Fisher	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Jerry Goll	Dean Overby	Dave Vandergon

Absent:

Lee Finstad	John Hanson	Jerry Meske
-------------	-------------	-------------

Guests:

Mark Landis (Burleigh County), Secretary-Treasurer, CVSO Association
Warren Tobin, Stutsman County VSO
Ron Otto, Morton County VSO
Jim Verwey, Barnes County VSO
Jerry Balzer
Joe Novak
ND Veterans Coordinating Council members
June Veit, Senator Conrad's Office

Motion by Dean Overby to accept April 20 & 21, 2007 meeting minutes, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously. Minutes to reflect correction on Page 5 – Hardship Grant - Income maximums: Veteran + 3 \$1,800

Speakers:

Francis Ziegler, Director, ND Department of Transportation

- ▶ Bridge Inspection Program - 5,026 bridges in North Dakota are inspected. Anything over 8' in length is considered a bridge.
- ▶ 42,000 people killed per year on U.S. highways. North Dakota set a record on seatbelt usage at 82.2%.
- ▶ Spoke on the new Bismarck Liberty Memorial Bridge. Implemented in the new design are five overlooks that reflect the five branches of service and eleven columns to reflect Armistice Day. The bridge should be opened by the Fall of 2008. Pictures and information are available on the DOT

website: <http://www.dot.nd.gov/projects.html>. Lyle Schuchard designated as the liaison between the veterans organizations and DOT to bring forward ideas.

MG David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, ND Nat'l Guard

- ▶ 500 soldiers deployed out of country. Update on status of Guard overseas.
- ▶ Since 9/11, well over 3,000 people have deployed out of North Dakota.
- ▶ A Freedom Salute for the 188th was held this past weekend. It was a well attended event that recognized the troops and their families.
- ▶ In the process of developing a stronger reintegration program. There have been five suicides to date.

Kelly Schmidt, ND State Treasurer

- ▶ As of June 30, 2007, the Postwar Trust Fund is in excess of five million dollars. By law \$4.1 million must be maintained in the fund.
- ▶ Commended the Committee on being good stewards of the fund.
- ▶ The goal of the fund is an 8% annual return. The fiscal year return ending June 30, 2007 was 10.8% or 2.8% over our goal.
- ▶ Reserve Fund is invested in CDs throughout North Dakota.

Rob McDivitt, FACHE, VA Medical Center Director

- ▶ 62 veterans enrolled at the Freedom Salute.
- ▶ VA personnel are attending events to ensure returning troops are aware of the benefits available to them.
- ▶ Adding twenty mental healthcare providers
- ▶ Hired a Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Nationwide hotline being put in place.
- ▶ Community Based Outpatient Clinics have open in Jamestown, Dickinson and Williston. Clinics in Devils Lake and Grand Forks have been proposed.
- ▶ No veteran in North Dakota is waiting more than 30 days for healthcare.
- ▶ LaVonne Liversage is the new Associate Director.

Larry Anderson, Director-Unemployment Insurance & Workforce Programs, Job Service North Dakota

- ▶ Spoke on the Talent Initiative.

- ▶ Working on proposal to use Governor's set aside resources to partner with National Guard on reintegrating troops who need job training and skills.
- ▶ Minimum wage increased across the nation.

Bruce, Murry, Protection & Advocacy Project

- ▶ Independent state agency that protects and advocates for the rights of people with disabilities. Serves eligible individuals of all ages with all types of disabilities.
- ▶ Looking for a veteran's representative to serve on the Governing Board.

Workforce Development Council Update - Lyle Schuchard

- ▶ Working on proposal to assist veterans who fall through the cracks in receiving educational assistance.

Lyle spoke on the Memorial Bridge and asked for input from those present at the meeting. It has been proposed by the city of Bismarck that a memorial be placed on the East Plaza in memory of those who gave their lives in the military since 9-11-01. A vote by the members of the ACOVA and the Veterans Coordinating Council members present was unanimous in not supporting this proposal. It was suggested that a memorial to all Veterans would be an excellent idea but not one dedicated to one group of Veterans or time period. One proposal is a memorial reflecting past, present and future veterans in one of the parks located beneath the bridge.

Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Bob Hanson, Commissioner

- ▶ Legislative wrap-up: best session ever for veterans.
 - ▶ Sent out letters to our POAs regarding their eligibility for the property tax exemption.
 - ▶ Budget passed with the Women Veterans' Coordinator position included. We didn't get money for the CVSOU Outreach program.
 - ▶ Asked to work on committee with Colonel Dohrman regarding future legislation
- ▶ Tom Summers is a permanent employee with the Department.
- ▶ Van lettering is completed with the exception of one van. Wally Buckingham assisted with the project. Good cooperation from the VA in making the vans available to get the lettering done.
- ▶ Women Veterans' Coordinator – Submitted the PIQ and received the classification from Central Personnel. Working with Attorney General's Office on the job announcement.

- ▶ Study Resolution – Hearing held a few weeks ago. Packet given to committee members on testimony.
- ▶ Progressive Financial Resources will be collecting on delinquent loans.
- ▶ Attended all veterans' organization conventions with the exception of the VVA.
- ▶ VA statistics distributed.
- ▶ Assisted Grand Forks county with their hiring of a new veterans' service officer.
- ▶ Gene Kouba and Tom Summers have done outreach training with new service officers. They also attended the Freedom Salute in Bismarck.
- ▶ Reported on new office space for Department.
- ▶ Veterans' Laws of North Dakota distributed to committee.
- ▶ Update on Honor Flight Program.
- ▶ Two year audit completed on Department. There is only one recommendation to be implemented.
- ▶ CVSO Conference in Fargo, September 18, 19, & 20, 2007
- ▶ Handed out Task and Responsibility Chart for Department of Veterans Affairs

Discussion on new office space, different uses for postwar trust funds and updating the strategic plan.

2007 – 2009 Postwar Trust Fund Proposed Budget – Chairman Jenson

Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept budget as proposed, second by Wally Buckingham.

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #1]

Discussed a situation in which the Minot volunteer drivers are required to travel to the Fargo VA for electronic fingerprinting. The Commissioner will find out if the VA will cover the costs incurred if the Minot van is used to transport the volunteers to Fargo.

Recommendation by Chairman and Secretary to appoint Norris Braaten, Daryl Beard and Orletta Kilen to the ND Veterans Home Governing Board.

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to approve recommendation, second by Dave Hilleren.

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #2]

Recommendation by Chairman and Secretary to appoint Norris Braaten as Chairman of the ND Veterans Home Governing Board.

Motion by Wally Buckingham to approve recommendation, second by Gary Skarphol.

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #3]

Update on North Dakota Veterans Home – Mark Johnson, Administrator

- ▶ Pitchfork Fondue was successful. This event celebrated the passage of legislation providing funds for building a new Veterans Home to replace the existing structure.
- ▶ Will need to purchase a bed to attain the number of allowable beds for the facility. This will put the Home in compliance with the VA and state guidelines.
- ▶ Still handling the issue of residents who are unable to share a room for a variety of reasons. Since many of the rooms are for double occupancy, this causes an imbalance between the number of beds available and the number of residents able to live at the Home.

Introduction of committee and department members.

Subcommittee assignments:

Department of Veterans Affairs: Jerry Goll, Lyle Schuchard, Dave Hilleren, Dean Overby, Wayne Paulson

Budget – Lyle Schuchard, Gary Skarphol, John Hanson, Dave Vandergon, Jerry Goll,

Postwar Trust Fund – Mike Fisher, Carl Bloomquist, Orletta Kilen, Dave Hilleren, Wally Buckingham, John Hanson

Appeals – Gary Skarphol, Jerry Meske, Wayne Paulson, Wally Buckingham, Lee Finstad, Dave Vandergon

Legislative – Lee Finstad, Dean Overby, Carl Bloomquist, Lyle Schuchard, Mike Fisher

Recessed for subcommittee meetings.

Committee Reconvened

Subcommittee Reports:

Department of Veterans Affairs – Dean Overby elected Chairman

Budget – John Hanson elected Chairman

PWTF - Wally Buckingham elected Chairman

Appeals – Dave Vandergon elected Chairman

Legislative – Lee Finstad elected Chairman

Recessed for previous subcommittees to finish up any old business.

Committee reconvened.

Comfort Inn, Bismarck

August 4, 2007

8:30am

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Present:

Carl Bloomquist
Wally Buckingham
Mike Fisher
Jerry Goll

Dave Hilleren
Rudy Jenson
Orletta Kilen
Dean Overby

Wayne Paulson
Lyle Schuchard
Gary Skarphol
Dave Vandergon

Absent:

Lee Finstad

John Hanson

Jerry Meske

Guests:

June Veit, Senator Conrad's Office
Joe Novak
Jerry Balzer
Ron Otto, Morton CVSO

ND Veterans Coordinating Council Report – Bob Evans

- ▶ Newly elected officers are: President - Gene Kouba, Vice President - Steven Frojen and Secretary/Treasurer – Bob Evans.
- ▶ Letter received concerning veterans' preference residency requirements. Coordinating Council would like to ask the Administrative Committee to request an Attorney General's opinion on the minimum requirements for residency for programs in North Dakota. If necessary, the Council would like to try to get something more uniform so there aren't big discrepancies.
- ▶ Recommendation that the Comfort Inn and Comfort Suites receive an award or plaque recognizing their support for the military.
- ▶ Veterans license plate – artwork sent in to 3M to be digitalized and put on metal for the plates – should be done late this fall or by wintertime.

Motion by Dean Overby the Administrative Committee in coordination with the Coordinating Council present the Comfort Inn and Comfort Suites with a resolution of appreciation along with a plaque recognizing their support for the military, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

Budget Committee – Lyle Schuchard, Chairman, no report.

PWTF Committee – Wally Buckingham, Chairman, no report.

Appeals – Dean Overby, Chairman, no report.

Legislative Committee – Gary Skarphol, no report.

Subcommittee on Department of Veterans Affairs – Gary Skarphol, Chairman
North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Task & Responsibility Sheet

14. Emergency Commission Requests

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to include Subcommittee along with Commissioner in regards to Emergency Commission Requests, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed unanimously.

Action Items:

a.) Veterans Aid Loan Program
Multiple Loan Policy #235

Motion by Dean Overby, second by Orletta Kilen:

“No waiting period required to restructure loan if applicant has paid previous loan(s) and received interest refund(s). All other applicants to be considered for a loan structuring on a case by case basis. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #1]

Motion by Carl Bloomquist, second by Wally Buckingham

“Delinquencies will be reviewed on a case by case basis.”

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #2]

Loan Policy #232

Motion by Orletta Kilen, second by Mike Fisher:

“Additional Loans: Interest refund not paid until loan amount paid in full. Refund only calculated on final loan starting on last loan date. No refund is calculated on prior loans.”

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #3]

b.) Grant Hardship Assistance Program
Grant Policy #480

Motion by Dean Overby to include “denture” and “special”, second by Orletta Kilen.

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #4]

Grant Policy #413

Motion by Dave Hilleren, second by Jerry Goll:

“Eligibility will be determined on net income. Public Assistance (i.e. food stamps, TANIF, fuel assistance) will not be counted as income.”

Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #5]

Freedom Scholarship

Motion by Jerry Goll to adopt “Freedom Scholarship” Grant as proposed, second Orletta Killen. Motion failed 4 – 8; ayes –Goll, Hilleren, Kilen, Skarphol; nays – Bloomquist, Buckingham, Fisher, Jenson, Overby, Paulson, Schuchard, Vandergon
[MOTION #6]

Motion by Dave Vandergon to refer scholarship back to Department to take into consideration the committee’s suggestions, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously.

Suggestions: include veterans; define financial need; set GPA at “2.5 or higher”;
information on the selection process / selection committee

Deposit Grant

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to move forward on the deposit grant with a \$500 limit and to obligate \$10,000 in PWTF interest earnings, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #7]

Adaptability Grant

Motion by Dave Hilleren not to go forward with the adaptability grant, second by Wayne Paulson. Motion passed unanimously.

Hearing Grant

Motion by Orletta Kilen to change the hearing grant to \$1,500 per ear, second by Mike Fisher. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #8]

Chairman Jenson thanked Wally Buckingham and the Commissioner on getting the lettering for the transportation vans.

Commissioner’s Evaluation – signed and on file with the Secretary.

Commissioner’s Salary Increase – needs the approval of the committee to take effect even though it has already been received.

Motion by Wayne Paulson to approve 4% salary increase for Commissioner, second by Carl Bloomquist. Friendly amendment offered to make the effective date July 1, 2007, accepted by Wayne Paulson and Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed 8 – 4; ayes – Bloomquist, Buckingham, Fisher, Goll, Hilleren, Kilen, Paulson, Vandergon; nays - Jenson, Overby, Schuchard, Skarphol. [MOTION #9]

Discussion on issues in the Department.

Motion by Gary Skarphol for a vote of confidence in the Commissioner, second by Lyle Schuchard. Motion failed, tie vote, 6 - 6; ayes - Bloomquist, Buckingham, Fisher, Kilen, Paulson, Vandergon; nays – Goll, Hilleren, Jenson, Overby, Schuchard, Skarphol [MOTION #10]

Motion by Gary Skarphol that Dean Overby and Wally Buckingham meet with Department personnel to determine what needs to be done to fix the problems within the Department, second by Lyle Schuchard. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #11]

Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept the subcommittee's reports, second by Orletta Kilen Motion passed.

Next meeting:
November 2 & 3, 2007 in Fargo

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard
Secretary